

BOOK REVIEWS

Holubar K, Fatović-Ferenčić S, Plewig G.

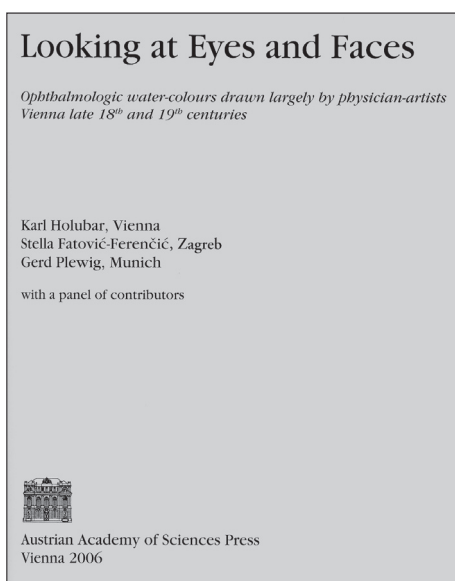


Fig. 1. Cover page

The intention of the book was, to present hand made illustrations from up to 200 years ago and have various medical specialists, ophthalmologists, dermatologists, give their immediate impressions. The authors wanted to emphasize how the eye, the hand, and the brain of a talented physician can prove dexterity and talent in several fields. A seminal figure certainly is George Joseph Beer (1763- 1821) known for founding the first university department of ophthalmology located in the Vi-

Looking at Eyes and Faces.
Ophthalmologic water-colours drawn largely by physician-artists Vienna, late 18th and 19th century. Vienna Austrian Academy of Sciences: 2006. 218 pages ISBN 13:978-37001-3667-5.

enna General Hospital in 1812. Beer was very popular at the time and many of well known showed up as his patients and acquaintances because he was an eminent eye surgeon, clinician, and a painter.

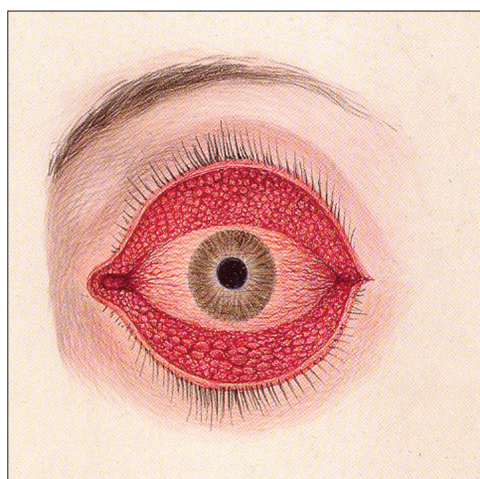


Fig. 2. An unknown author one of the pictures from the book presenting vernal conjunctivitis or atopic keratoconjunctivitis



The book contains eight chapters : *Introduction* by Walter B Shelley, *A Look Back - into the Beer-Jaeger Family* by Jan Odorich Abel (from the Beer progeny); *The Vienna School of Ophthalmology and its Roots* by Karl Holubar and Stella Fatović-Ferenčić; *The water-colours and drawings from 1782 on, clinical and histopathologic: an individual evaluation by ophthalmologists* by Edward Jaeger (Wills Eye Institute, Philadelphia and namesake of the famous Vienna ophthalmologist in the 19th century), Robert Nussenblatt (head of the National Eye Institute at the NIH in Bethesda, Günther Grabner, head of the eye department at Salzburg University, Hans Slezak (emeritus from the University of Vienna), Anselm Kampik, from the University of Munich, *Descriptions by other medical specialists; Medical Terminology, Then and Today* by Darrell Wilkinson, nestor of British dermatology, *Vision and fiction: The Eye and Visual Perception as a Metaphor in Literature* by Marita Amm, from Halle University, Germany, *Senses and Their Medialization* by Michael Metzeltin, professor of Romance languages, University of Vienna; *The Psychology of Vision: Beauty in the Brain of the Observer* by Ingo Rentschler, again a professor from the Ludwig-Maximilain University of Munich; *True to Nature: Ethics of Medical Imagery* by Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Karl Holubar; and *Epilogue* by Karl Holubar and Gerd Plewig (the latter again from Munich University).

The set of eye diseases presented in the book covers problems ranging from malignant melanoma to tapeworm infection, cataracts to uveitis, and hemangiomas to keratoconus. Each is richly enhanced by a clinical description and detailed differential diagnosis provided by a current authority. Stripped of their modern diagnostic armamentarium these consultants project themselves back in time when observing patients was the only diagnostic device.

Our eye is our digital camera, although a description of what we see is limited to our skill in language. For that reason this book can be seen also as some kind of experiment performed to see how original pictures of diseases from past periods will influence modern experts, how they will deal with the material visually but also intellectually following associative paths of thinking and concluding. For that reason this book is challenging the time it is not classical history neither contemporary, it is simply timeless.

The whole project was prepared within the frame-work of an inter-academy project *Iconography in Medicine*, of the Austrian and Croatian Academies of Sciences. The gallery of pictures (drawings, gouaches, prints), is a selection, taken from the files of the Vienna Institute where the images are kept since they were donated by the Department of Ophthalmology, University of Vienna, mainly in the mid-seventies of the 20th century. Hopefully we shall set eyes on some more such superb projects between the two Academies and unearth treasures stowed away in crates and boxes, destined to be forgotten.

Željko Dugac



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